

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3679

INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON

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UNCLAS MADRID 8046

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, SP

SUBJECT: GOS RECOGNITION OF REGIONAL LANGUAGES

REF: MADRID 7985

1. IN A DECREE PUBLISHED SATURDAY THE GOS RECOGNIZED THE REGIONAL LANGUAGES OF SPAIN--BASQUE, CATALAN, GALICIAN--AS NATIONAL LANGUAGES WHOSE USE WOULD BE PROTECTED BY THE GOVERNMENT. THIS USE, HOWEVER, WAS EFFECTIVELY LIMITED TO CULTURAL AFFAIRS, WITH SPANISH REMAINING THE LANGUAGE FOR ALL GOVERNMENTAL ACTIVITIES WITH THE MINOR EXCEPTION OF LOCAL DELIBERATIONS.

2. THE DECREE LIMITED THIS INTERNAL ORAL USE OF THE REGIONAL LANGUAGES IN LOCAL GOVERNMENTAL BODIES BY PRESCRIBING THE USE OF SPANISH IN ANY GENERAL SESSIONS WHICH WOULD LEAD TO WRITTEN PROCLAMATIONS OR COMMUNICATIONS AND BY STIPULATING THAT NO SPANIARD SHOULD BE DISADVANTAGED THROUGH NOT KNOWING OR USING A REGIONAL
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LANGUAGE.

3. COMMENT: THOUGH UNDERSTANDABLY NOT RESPONSIVE TO ALL THE LANGUAGE DEMANDS OF THE ADVOCATES OF REGIONAL AUTONOMY, THIS DECREE IS A VAST IMPROVEMENT ON THE LONG OFFICIAL PROHIBITION OF THE PUBLIC USE--IN ANY FASHION--OF THE REGIONAL LANGUAGES, PARTICULARLY BY PERMITTING THEIR USE IN THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA. ALONG WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COMMISSION TO DRAFT A SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE STATUTE FOR THE BASQUES, THIS DECREE SEEMS AN OBVIOUS MOVE TO HELP DEFUSE SOME OF THE BASQUE AND CATALAN RESENTMENTS (SEE REFTEL).
STABLER

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